

# **NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY**

## **Department of Family Administration Administrative Office of the Courts**

### **COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATE (CASA) GRANTS - FY 2011**

Issue Date: January 28, 2010

Applications Due: March 15, 2010

#### **General Information**

The Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Program was authorized to operate in Maryland subject to approved Rules and Guidelines, by the 1989 adoption of Courts and Judicial Proceedings Article, §3-830. The Annotated Code of Maryland states that the role of the Court Appointed Special Advocate is to:

- Provide the court with background information to aid the court in making decisions in the child's best interest; and
- Ensure that the child is provided appropriate case planning and services.

The CASA volunteer is considered a friend of the court and does not have party status. The volunteer is considered an agent of the court and is appointed at the judge's discretion to represent the child's best interests. Volunteers are not represented by an attorney but should be provided access to legal counsel by the program.

The Maryland Judiciary receives state funding each year to enhance the circuit courts' ability to provide a fair and efficient forum for resolving domestic and juvenile matters. The Department of Family Administration (DFA) at the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) is requesting applications for CASA Grants. The grants, designed to improve the management of family law cases and support a spectrum of services to families involved in the legal system are administered by the DFA.

Subject to the provision of funds for Fiscal Year 2011, grants will be awarded to applicable programs which enhance the experience of families and children involved with Maryland's legal system.

#### **Funding Priorities**

For best consideration, applicants should demonstrate a need within the community that is to be served and that the program's services will be complimentary to those provided by the court. Priority will be given to the continuation of projects currently funded through the DFA CASA Grants.

#### **Eligible Grantees**

1. Eligible grantees include any government/government entities, non-profit organizations or institutions of higher education administering a CASA program.

To be eligible for funding, the program must:

- a. Be a member in good standing of the National CASA Association and in compliance with NCASAA standards;
- b. Be a member in good standing of the Maryland CASA Association and in compliance with Maryland CASA standards;
- c. Be in compliance with all CASA Rules & Guidelines (found at [www.courts.state.md.us/family/grantadmin.html](http://www.courts.state.md.us/family/grantadmin.html) );
- d. Demonstrate the ability (i.e. experience and expertise) to provide the service; (NOTICE: Qualifications of all new Program Directors must be submitted to the Administrative Office of the Courts prior to budget approval and release of funds) and
- e. Demonstrate adequate internal financial controls to properly administer grant funds.

For CASA programs who have received AOC funding in the prior year (FY10), all required reports and documentation must have been submitted prior to this grant's submission deadline.

2. Grants are also available to any government/government entities, non-profit organizations or institutions of higher education in which there is not presently an established and active CASA program, but where one is being planned. These groups are eligible to apply for a one-time planning grant from the DFA. All groups must work in conjunction with the Maryland CASA Association when starting a program for a jurisdiction.

### **Grant Review**

The AOC is committed to a fair and open process in awarding grants. Grant applications will be reviewed by a committee of DFA staff members and the Maryland CASA State Director. Final award determinations will be made based on the recommendations of the review committee.

Awards will be granted in accordance with process explained in great detail in the *Performance Based Funding Model for Maryland CASA Programs* found at [www.courts.state.md.us/family/grantadmin.html](http://www.courts.state.md.us/family/grantadmin.html). In accordance with that model, the CASA grant award is a sum of four possible awards:

1. Quantitative Award – based on the number of active volunteers in the program.
  2. Qualitative Award – based on the program's efforts to meet the ten performance elements.
  3. One-Time Expansion Grant – a flat, prorated amount awarded for use for hiring an additional case supervisor.
  4. Multi-Jurisdictional Bonus – a flat prorated amount per additional jurisdiction determined by number of active volunteers in the additional jurisdiction.
- NOTE: Changes have been made to the way the Multi-jurisdictional Bonus is determined. Please review the *Performance Based Funding Model for Maryland CASA Programs* for more information.

All grantees should thoroughly review the *Performance Based Funding Model for Maryland CASA Programs* before applying as it has been updated for FY11.

### **Award Information**

The availability of funds for this program is contingent upon the provision of funds in the Maryland Judiciary budget by the Maryland General Assembly for Fiscal Year 2011. Funding decisions will be made by the end of April. Grantees will be notified in writing of changes to the project award based on the Judiciary's budget constraints.

### **Funding Cycle**

All granted funds must be expended during the period of July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011. No extensions will be granted.

### **Grant Payments**

If awarded, and unless otherwise provided for in the grant agreement, grant funds will be paid on a *reimbursement basis* only, upon submission of timely financial expenditure reporting and a request for payment each quarter.

### **Matching Fund Requirement**

CASA grantees must provide a one hundred percent match for their total CASA grant award.

Waiver: At the discretion of the grantor, matching fund requirements can be waived for:

- start-up programs,
- the optional one-time expansion grant bonus, and
- the multi-jurisdictional bonus.

### **Modifications**

Grantees may make minor budget adjustments between existing line items during the course of the fiscal year. The modifications must be submitted for review by the DFA using page 2 of the Mid-Year Budget Modification form on the DFA website:

[www.courts.state.md.us/family/grantadmin.html](http://www.courts.state.md.us/family/grantadmin.html).

Projects seeking a modification that would result in a deviation of 10% of the overall budget or \$25,000, whichever is lower, or any commitments such as a new position or contract which is likely to impact future fiscal years, must be approved in advance of spending the funds. Grantees must submit modification requests in writing using page 1 & 2 of the Mid-Year Budget Modification form for approval found at:

[www.courts.state.md.us/family/grantadmin.html](http://www.courts.state.md.us/family/grantadmin.html). These expenditures that do not comply with the adjusted or approved budget will not be authorized until the DFA staff signs and returns a copy of the approved budget modification form to the grantee.

### **Reporting**

Programs must use the *CASA Outcomes Measurement and Evaluation Tool (COMET)* for data collection purposes. Programs will be required to report on the progress toward specific project goals as well as provide statistical information, on a quarterly

and annual basis.

Specific statistical reporting requirements, including required reporting forms, will be available to the grantee prior to the start of the funding period. Reporting forms will be posted on the DFA's website at [www.courts.state.md.us/family/grantadmin.html](http://www.courts.state.md.us/family/grantadmin.html).

Information collected from the quarterly and annual reports will be used to monitor funded programs and assist the DFA in determining if the program is meeting its stated goals and objectives. Additionally, the AOC reserves the right to use this data in statistical reports, annual reports, and other publications for general distribution.

## ***QUARTERLY***

### ***Statistical***

All CASA grantees are required to comply with quarterly reporting. Programs will be required to track statistical information, including, but not limited to:

- Number of children served
- Number of volunteers trained and assigned
- Status of children's cases at closure
- Number of court reports and recommendations submitted/accepted by the court

### ***Narrative***

CASA grantees are encouraged to provide a narrative report when necessary to explain any inconsistencies or abnormal information in the statistical report or to highlight any information that the program believes to be important or indicative of a trend.

### ***Financial***

All CASA grantees are required to submit quarterly financial reports reflecting their expenditures for the quarter, as well as proof of matching funds.

Quarterly Reports and Requests for Payment are due (postmarked) not later than 15 days after the close of the quarter based on the following schedule:

<u>Reporting Period</u>	<u>Report Due Date</u>
1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter (July 1 thru Sept 30)	October 15
2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter (Oct 1 thru Dec 31)	January 15
3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter (Jan1 thru Mar 31)	April 15
4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter (April 1 thru June 30)	July 15

## ***ANNUAL***

Local CASA grantees must submit an annual report to the Maryland CASA Association no later than July 15, 2011. The Maryland CASA Association must submit a combined statewide report to the DFA no later than August 1, 2011.

### **Personnel and Payroll Records**

All grantees must follow their organization's payroll, personnel, and time and attendance policies for each position provided for by these grants. These policies must be in writing. Upon request, grantees must provide a copy of those policies to the DFA.

### **Procurement**

All grantees must abide by their organization's procurement and financial policies in expending grant funds. These policies must be in writing. Upon request, grantees must provide a copy of these policies to the DFA.

Grantees that do not have an established written procurement policy must solicit three written bids or proposals for goods or services to be purchased with grant funds for over \$2,500. Grantees must maintain proof of compliance with this requirement and provide verification that the policy was followed for applicable purchases, upon request.

Goods and/or services purchased with grant funds shall remain in the ownership and liability of the grantee, and the grantee shall assume responsibility for all routine equipment maintenance and/or replacement costs.

Grantees that use grant funds for contractual services must notify potential contractors that funds for the project originated from a Maryland Judiciary grant.

### **Accounting Requirements**

Programs are required to establish and maintain financial accounting systems and records to accurately account for funds. Minimally, they should conform to the National CASA Minimum Recommended Internal Financial Control Procedures. Programs are required to have an independent audit conducted annually. Grant funds are subject to any additional terms and conditions issued by the Administrative Office of the Courts upon award of grants, and may be terminated if any terms or conditions are violated, or if adequate progress toward project goals is not demonstrated. All financial records must be maintained until the Grantee is audited by the State Legislative Auditors.

### **Site Visits**

Grantees may be subject to site visits by DFA staff. The site visits will be designed to ensure compliance with the grant guidelines and evaluate the project in terms of its stated goals and objectives. Site visits will also include a fiscal review of grantee/project expenditures.

### **Acknowledgement of Support**

All CASA Grantees agree that any publication (written, visual or sound) issued by the Grantee describing projects funded in whole or in part with Maryland Judiciary Grant Program funds shall contain the following statement: "This project is supported by a CASA Grant from the Maryland Judiciary, Administrative Office of the Courts, Department of Family Administration."

The DFA requests notification from grantees of any events (e.g. trainings, outreach events, volunteer appreciation events, etc.) that occur as a result of DFA grant funds received.

### **Applicable Guidelines**

In applying for funds, grantees agree to comply with the *Maryland CASA Program Performance Standards* posted at: [www.courts.state.md.us/family/grantadmin.html](http://www.courts.state.md.us/family/grantadmin.html).

### **Application Information**

All applicants are required to submit the completed CASA Grant Application including a proposed budget.

The Grant Application is posted at: [www.courts.state.md.us/family/grantadmin.html](http://www.courts.state.md.us/family/grantadmin.html)

***Submission:*** This application must be submitted electronically (by email) AND by regular mail. Two original copies are required by mail. If funds are granted, one original will be returned to the grantee with the commitment letter.

***Deadline:*** E-mailed applications must be received at the DFA by:  
**5:00pm on Monday, March 15, 2010.**  
Original copies must follow; submitted by regular mail.

***Electronic copies should be emailed to:***

[Kelly.Franks@mdcourts.gov](mailto:Kelly.Franks@mdcourts.gov)

\*The subject line of the email should indicate the grant type, the fiscal year, and program county or name, *example: "CASA FY11 Ann Arundel"*

***Mailed copies should be directed to:***

Connie Kratovil-Lavelle, Executive Director  
Department of Family Administration  
Administrative Office of the Courts  
580 Taylor Avenue, 2nd Floor, A Pod  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

### **Technical Assistance**

An informational session will be provided to anyone seeking additional information regarding the application process.

#### **Technical Assistance Meeting: March 2, 2010 at 10:00am**

Judicial Education Conference Center (JECC), Conference Rm. #2  
2009-D Commerce Park Drive, Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Attendance at the informational session is *not mandatory* and is offered only as a supplement to the information included within this NOFA and the application. Please contact Angela Langston at 410-260-1740 to notify us if you plan to attend the session or to request directions.

*For further information regarding this notice of funding or the application process, please contact Kelly Franks, Department of Family Administration, at (410) 260-1722.*